

2004

# A Report on how conducting case studies in an industry setting affects a student's practical knowledge in the field of Hospitality Management

Jason Duprat

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses>

---

## Recommended Citation

Duprat, Jason, "A Report on how conducting case studies in an industry setting affects a student's practical knowledge in the field of Hospitality Management" (2004). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Accessed from

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact [ritscholarworks@rit.edu](mailto:ritscholarworks@rit.edu).

**A report on how conducting case studies  
in an Industry setting affects a student's  
practical knowledge in the field of  
Hospitality Management**

**Author: Jason Duprat  
Senior Project Report  
November 2004**

**Abstract:** There has been the need to assess the effectiveness of the Hotel Operations course at Rochester Institute of Technology. The purpose of this report is to analyze the perceptions of these students and determine the effectiveness of the case method of instruction in the Hotel Operations course. A survey tool was used to obtain student responses. The tool was distributed to <sup>twenty six</sup> 26 students; there was a response rate of 46 percent yielding a sample size of <sup>twelve</sup> 12. The responses were analyzed using SPSS software. Also a list of seven universities was compiled in order to get an idea how many other universities are utilizing a similar teaching format. The universities were chosen at random, however all either work closely with the industry or have a captive hotel. Only five universities responded, the University of New Hampshire was the only one that collaborated with industry while conducting case studies. It was found that there was strong support for the case studies teaching method. Students feel that it was a valid technique that increases their theory retention. The majority of students do not believe that cases conducted in the Industry are more valuable than those conducted in the classroom. A manager can develop the most effective case studies from real situations. They should also be conducted in small groups followed by short presentations and class discussions. Also the manager that had to deal with the case in real life should be available to inform the students of the decisions that were made by management and why. Case studies should also utilize class time in order to obtain maximum participation. **Key Words:** enterprise learning, case study, case method, teaching methods, industry learning, industry, academia, and case incident.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract</b> .....	i
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	ii
<b>Chapter One</b> .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Problem.....	2
Purpose.....	2
Scope and Limitations.....	3
Methodology.....	3
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	4
Literature Review.....	4
Value of Captive Hotels.....	4
Industry and Academia Cooperation.....	5
University Benefits.....	6
Industry Benefits.....	8
The Case Study.....	8
Strengths of the Case Study.....	10
Weaknesses of the Case Study.....	11
<b>Chapter Three</b> .....	12
Discussion of Finding and Results.....	12
University Standards.....	13
Case Studies in Industry.....	14
Table 1.0(Classroom versus Industry Setting).....	15
Table 1.1(Value of the Case Study Location).....	16
Case Studies.....	16
Table 2.0(Utilization of Knowledge While Solving Case Studies)...	17
Table 2.1(Validity of the Case Study).....	18
Collaboration with Industry.....	19
Table 3.0(Real versus Simulated Case Studies).....	20
<b>Chapter Four</b> .....	20
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	20
Conclusions.....	20
Recommendations.....	22
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	24
<b>Appendix A: Survey Tool</b> .....	26



## **Introduction**

The hospitality and service management program at Rochester Institute of Technology is a program that is constantly evolving to provide the best educational experiences for its students. In 2003 changes were made to the Hotel Operations course at RIT. These changes involve the collaboration between the management executives at the RIT Inn and Conference Center and the Professors of RIT's hospitality program. The creation of these changes created a new milestone for the Hospitality program at RIT and is allowing for exchange of ideas and experiences between academia and the hotel Industry. Undergraduates that participate in the Hotel Operations course travel to the RIT Inn and meet with its management team. Here the students are able to discuss and acquire knowledge on topics ranging from industry trends, personal experiences, sales and marketing, operations, maintenance, and housekeeping. In this setting undergraduates are also taking on the task of creating solutions to case studies. These case studies are "stories" of actual problems that management has resolved in the past at the RIT Inn and Conference Center during its daily operations. After analyzing the cases the undergraduates develop possible solutions to the problems and then present them to their class classmates and to the management staff at the RIT Inn. At this point an open forum takes place and management explains what steps they had actually taken to resolve the issues that were presented in the cases. This type of scenario takes place multiple times throughout the quarter and is used to supplement the classroom lectures. The objective of this type of collaboration between academia and industry is to further the

development of the undergraduates' managerial thinking. In order to assist the administration at RIT, I chose to study the effectiveness of this teaching format.

### **Problem Statement**

Formal research is needed to assess the effectiveness of conducting case studies in an Industry setting. During co-ops students at Rochester Institute of Technology are often not able to develop the management experience that is necessary in order to perform well once they graduate and enter their chosen field. The hospitality students at RIT are required to complete four cooperative education experiences. These co-ops are similar to internships, however the student must receive compensation. While working on a co-op the students usually work in entry-level jobs and obtain knowledge relating to the operations of a facility. Although learning the intricacies of each department is a very important aspect of being able to effectively manage a facility, it is also critical for the student to experience the types of situations and problems that a manager would face. The changes that have been implemented in the Hotel Operations course attempt to help alleviate this difficulty, however formal research had not been performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The faculty in the hospitality management program at RIT has worked to create a solution to the lack of practical knowledge; however there is a need to determine how successful these changes have been in order to continue to provide the best educational experience for the students. The purpose of this report is to research and evaluate the

effectiveness of the case study teaching method in the Hotel Operations course. The author will study a small sample of students that have completed the Hotel Operations course after the changes were put in place. The author hopes to learn how they feel about the process of conducting and reviewing the case studies in an industry setting. With this format students can work closely with management personnel versus conducting them in a classroom setting.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This survey has a specific scope and will be conducted with several limitations. The results of this survey may be biased due to the skills and passion of the instructor and the management personnel. The scope of this survey is limited to students that attend RIT and have taken the Hotel Operations course within the past two years. Due to the ten-week time constraints the students that have graduated or are no longer in the Hospitality program at RIT will not be included in the survey. Furthermore, since the program has only been in effect for two years there is a limited number of students resulting in a small testable sample size ( $n=26$ ). The author is also limited in his research because he is unable to locate any other universities that are offering similar educational experiences early enough to conduct research with them.

### **Methodology**

The author will develop a tentative title, which will allow for general research to be completed until a narrower topic can be selected. After preliminary research a meeting will be held with the project mentor and the title will be fine-tuned and targeted



research will begin at the library, with the assistance of the hospitality department's research liaison. The author will begin investigating the topic utilizing a number of databases, RIT's library catalog, interlibrary loan, and other online resources. The researcher will use the information that was found during the research phase to develop a literature review. This portion of the project will give detailed information regarding current literature and research that relates to the research topic. This section will also discuss whether this literature supports the use of case studies as a teaching method.

It will be necessary to develop a survey that can be distributed to all the students that have taken the Hotel Operations course since the changes have been put in place. The author will develop a survey utilizing Microsoft Word. The project mentor will make suggestions and the revise survey, which will then distributed to all the available students. The results of the survey will be collated by means of the SPSS program. Findings from the survey will then be discussed and used to develop a conclusion and formulate recommendations. This proposal will then be revealed to the Project mentor and will allow for the faculty members to decide whether any modifications need to be made to the current course design.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Value of Captive Hotels**

Captive hotels are valuable tools in hospitality education; however they may not be vital to a quality education in the field of hospitality management. Captive hotels are defined as hotels that are associated with a university or are adjacent to it (LeBruto, 1994). Representatives of schools that operate captive hotels have stated that the



program indeed has tradeoffs among cost, customer service and education (LeBruto 1994). Although these are important facts to consider, it is important to keep in mind that none of the universities have reported to be having financial difficulties (LeBruto 1994). In fact, the captive facilities often subsidize their parent schools. In General captive hotels tend to be smaller in size, usually under 150 rooms. Therefore they are not seen as a threat to the surrounding hotel industry. This remains true even though many captive hotels operative under a not-for profit tax status. Lebruto (1994) feels that "a major issue in hotel management education is ensuring the application of classroom learning experiences to actual management situations" (p. 72). A study published by Cornell University reported on the perceived importance of management skills obtained in captive facilities compared to those that can be learned on elsewhere. The study included the survey of 232 people. Among them were 29 educators, 20 trainers, and 183 trainees. The surveys were distributed evenly among 10 hotel management schools, 5 of which had captive hotels and 5 of which did not (Lebruto, 1994). Through a carefully tested questionnaire, the survey found that the respondents felt that it was not necessary for students to have gained their practical experience in a captive facility in order to a university to have an effective hotel management program.

### **Industry and Academia Cooperation**

#### **University Benefits**

The collaboration between industry and university is vital to quality education and the development of undergraduates. Industry cooperation with universities is important in the area of curriculum design. The University of South Florida's new School of Hotel

and Restaurant Management has a program “that emphasizes a business curriculum that was planned through collaboration with industry professionals” (Meinhardt, 2003, p.4). Since the hospitality industry is maturing there is a greater demand for employees with higher education and skill levels. With this in mind, the School founding director, Jay Schrock “involved community, business and industry leaders” while designing the schools curriculum (Meinhardt, 2003, p.4). Students are already benefiting from this cooperation. Mckibbon and brother Inc. is a large player in the hotel industry that owns many hotels in the southeast and is ready to begin recruiting form the new school (Meinhardt, 2003). Cornell Univerisity is one of the leading hospitality universities that has also realized the importance of academia and industry interaction. Every year at Cornell students take over the school owned 150 room Statler Hotel. This event is known as Hotel Ezra Cornell during this event more than 750 of the 900 students demonstrate their hospitality skills to over 300 alumni and guests. During this event the students are able to interact and network with hotel executives. Dickinson (2000) stated “This experience gives students the chance to focus their career aspirations” (p. 5). Often times the conversations that develop between the students and the alumni lead into summer jobs or even full time careers. (Dickinson, 2000) The students are also able to gain some first hand knowledge from the Alumni through seminar that discuss important industry trends and issues.

A document published by the National Employer Leadership Council in partnership with the Hospitality Business Alliance, outlines many other benefits to the involvement of industry in education. The organization feels “It is imperative to bring together employers, educators, and students to create coordinated events and activities

that allow students to understand the career options that are available and the skills required to succeed in these areas.” (National Employer Leadership, 2000, p.2)

Employers need to be committed to improving the achievement levels of students and preparing them for their careers. The organization feels that “the strongest job candidates need to illustrate an understanding of business, finance, accounting, human resources, customer relations, marketing, public speaking, food, and technology” (National Employer Leadership, 2000, p.4). Cooperating with industry is an innovative way to educate students and is gaining momentum. For example In Baltimore, Maryland the convention center plus 72 local restaurants are doing their part by enlightening students through job shadowing (National Employer Leadership, 2000). Outback Steakhouse in Denver, Colorado is assisting students through mentoring programs (National Employer Leadership, 2000). In 1996 the need for a formalized and structured way to create collaboration, was addressed when the National Restaurant Association and the American Hotel & Motel Association formed the Hospitality Business Alliance. This program was designed to provide high school students with an introduction to a variety of hospitality careers (National Employer Leadership, 2000). The need for Industry and education to work more closely is not only something that is being noticed in the United States, in London for example the President of the Hotel and Catering International Management Association, Alistar Telfer called for greater cooperation at the HCIMA President’s Dinner (*Industry and Education*, 2000). He said “Industry should take risks and place students in an environment where they can learn” and “colleges and universities need to prepare students even more thoroughly for the industry- not only with the skills but also what to expect and what will be expected of them” .(*Industry and Education*, 2000, p.4)



## Industry benefits

The industry often reaps many benefits from the cooperation with academia.  
*what about?*  
The arrival of Johnson and Wales University is a perfect case in point. The university offers degrees in culinary, hospitality, management and business. Classes are slated to begin in the fall of 2004 and the arrival of 112 Million dollar school has been greatly anticipated by the local hospitality industry. "The General Managers of some of the top hotels in Charlotte, NC are expecting a pool of hardworking and driven students to raise the local industries bar" (Thiede, 2004). The local hotel and restaurant industry are already beginning see applications for jobs and they soon will be able to fill many positions as the students are looking to earn extra money or fulfill their cooperative education requirements. It is also expected that the school will aid in raising the level of professionalism of the hospitality sector (Thiede, 2004). The Industry benefits by being able to fill job openings and obtain exceptional employees. Also the close interaction with universities can be utilized as a powerful piece of public relations material and free publicity can come about as a result.

## The Case Study

The term case studies have been used in business and management for some time. There are three contexts in which the term "case study" can be used. Since this often leads to confusion the author will outline the different uses of the term. The term "case study" used throughout this paper refers to first meaning discussed. The term "case study" can be used when the case is implemented as a teaching device used to discover



how different business situations develop (Remenyi, Money, Price, & Bannister, 2002). Students discuss the issues of the case and what they would have done or what could have been done differently to solve the problem described in the case. Secondly the term “case study” is used to describe the act of collecting data about a phenomenon. Here the researcher is not interested in the specific circumstances in the case in question (Remenyi, Money, Price, & Bannister, 2002). For example a researcher may want to explore the host guest interactions; the focus of the research would not be the companies where the research is being conducted, it would be on the interactions occurring (Remenyi, Money, Price, & Bannister, 2002). Thirdly, the term “case study” can be used to refer to the study of a particular organization itself and also may be comparative between multiple companies (Remenyi, Money, Price, & Bannister, 2002).

The first use of the term “case study” discussed above is most commonly used in the business and management fields because of their educational value. The case study has been around for many years and it has withstood the test of time. The first book of published cases came out in 1921 (Kreck, 1992). Haywood & Bauer (1984) stated that “This teaching method has made Harvard one of the most highly thought of names in business education but not everyone is convinced” (p. 66). This type of case study is typically a written presentation of a business situation; a complex case study that has been developed specifically for teaching purposes and may be as long as 20 to 30 pages (Shaw, 1982). It is also important to know that the term “case incident” is also commonly used term; the difference between the two expressions is most commonly length and depth of the case (Wright, 1996). In a case incident the length is usually around one page and is designed to illustrate a single concept or theory (Wright, 1996).

### Strengths of the case study

This form of teaching is said to give students a break from the typical class lecture and allow them the chance to unravel a real problem. An effective case is usually description of a business problem that has actually been faced by management executives. The use of the “real” case study is said to give students insight into the industry by allowing them to focus on typical issues. Case studies also facilitate self-expression through group discussion and immediate feed back from instructors and peers (Haywood, & Bauer, 1984). A study conducted by Phillip Wright and published by *Education and Training* attempts to demonstrate the perceptions of the case incident by a survey of BBA undergraduates. The study was able to show that 91.7 percent of students felt that “the use of case incidents in the classroom is a valid technique for teaching undergraduate students in business”(Wright, 1996, p.22); 72 percent of students felt that when they were informed that a case incident is “real” they tended to be more interested (Wright, 1996). It was also shown through this study that 86 percent of students felt that dialogue helped to add to the learning experience (Wright, 1996). Based on his research Wright felt that the most effective way to utilize the case method was in class. He reasoned that there was little correlation between those students that supported the use of case incidents and their willingness to read them before class (Wright, 1996). It has also been reported that the case method is an advantageous technique because the students are able to incorporate their own life experiences and are able to apply their knowledge to the case, which leads to increased participation (Wright, 1996).

### Weakness of the Case Study

Although the case study has shown to be an effective teaching tool it also has its drawbacks. In an article published by *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, it was shown that the case method of instruction does not facilitate the use of investigational techniques to solve operational problems. "An operational problem exists when there is an undesired result" (Kreck, 1992, p. 70). For example, "sales are lower than normal." This type of situation requires a student to utilize investigational methods to break down the problem and analyze each component. The student would then have to ask how it relates and then determine whether it is significant to the problem at hand. This type of learning is only available through the "live" method of case study. In this method the student would be given an operational problem in one statement and would then report to the cooperating hotel that was experiencing the problem and being to investigate all the possible causes. After thorough puzzle solving the students would then develop and report back to management a possible solution. The weakness of the written case method is evident. When a student conducts a case study that is written out, all the facts of the situation are presented to the students and no investigational technique is allowed for. The student often does not get a clear view of what relates to the problem and is forced to make assumptions in order to develop a viable solution. The written method of case teaching also may reinforce a student's inability to perform double-loop learning (Kreck, 1992). This occurs when a student must alter fundamental beliefs as new information is revealed. Washington State is one university that has already caught on to the weakness of the "book" case study and has altered its program to include the "live" cases (Kreck, 1992). In the study by Wright a small percentage of students, around



12 percent show distaste for the case study method (Wright, 1996). This creates a need for the students to be closely monitored by the instructor because those who do not prefer this method of teaching may make it difficult for the groups to conduct effective group discussions (Wright, 1996). Another downside to the method reported by Wright was that some students would have difficulty with some cases due to the lack of background information, which forces students to make assumptions unless the instructors were able to provide more information (Wright, 1996).

### **Discussion of Findings and Results**

The author's goal has been to evaluate the effectiveness of conducting case studies in an industry setting. In order to accomplish this, the problem was broken down into three important pieces. Research was then conducted in order to evaluate the importance of each component. A survey was developed as the main research tool and was designed to parallel studies performed by Phillip Wright (1996). It was comprised of <sup>(p. 11)</sup> 14 statements, which were designed to test students' perceptions relating to specific components of the project. Similar questions were used in the survey conducted by Phillip Wright and published in his article (Wright, 1996). Some of the questions were then utilized the survey tool created by the author as a means to accurately compare results from each survey. A forced likert scale was used and the students were asked to choose one of five options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) Five demographic questions were added at the end of the survey to allow the author to observe whether any correlations existed. The demographics that were measured include



gender, students' year status, year the course was completed, whether they had management experience and whether they were working in the industry.

#### University Standards

The author also sought to find how common it was to conduct case studies in an Industry setting. To achieve this, a list of seven universities was compiled. These institutions were selected based on the descriptions provided by "Hospitality University Directory." In order to qualify, the school description had to state that the school operated a captive hotel or state that they were working very closely with the industry. The universities that were selected were Cornell, University of Houston, University of New Hampshire, University of North Texas, Northern Arizona University, Johnson and Whales, and Michigan State. Telephone interviews and email were used to obtain information on class structure and the use of case studies. Of the seven universities, only five responded to the researchers many attempts to contact them. The University of Houston is currently using case studies in their Hotel Operations course. These case studies were derived from textbooks and the students work on semester long projects to develop solutions to the cases. At the University of New Hampshire students are mentored by Hotel staff while working on semester long projects, however these are not necessarily case studies. This university does, however utilize case studies and collaborate with local B&B managers to develop solutions. The University of North Texas uses simulations in a course they offer titled, Hotel and Restaurant Management Systems. They also use case study analysis in their capstone course, Hospitality Business Strategies, and in their internship class. The case studies in Hospitality Business

Strategies were entirely created by ClubCorp, which is a company that owns roughly 200 golf courses, golf resorts, country and business clubs. The contact at Northern Arizona University stated that he does not use any case studies in the hotel courses that he instructs. Johnson and Whales does not utilize case studies in their Hotel Property Operations course, however they do conduct textbook case studies in courses such as human resource management, marketing, and senior seminar. This university is also the only one contacted that capitalizes on the power of the "live" case method. Students here are given a problem from a local restaurant and investigate the problem on-site and report back to the classroom with solutions.

#### Case Studies in Industry

Captive Hotels represent an important component of conducting case studies in the industry. The researcher was only able to locate one study on the topic of captive hotels. Although these facilities can aid in the educational processes of a university, the study published by *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* found that "based on the perceptions of students and faculty, the presence of a captive facility was not perceived to be essential to an effective hotel management practicum." (LeBruto, 1994, p.72) This research gives us some valuable insight into how the value of the captive hotel is perceived, however it is the only study available and conclusions cannot be made from this study alone. One thing that could be expanded on in further studies would be whether a captive hotel makes a hotel management program more effective. A study based on this question could yield results that would be of more value this author's research. The author attempted to evaluate student's perceptions of the Captive Hotel

through his survey tool that was distributed to past students of the Hotel Operations course at RIT. The following survey question was used: "I feel case studies conducted in the classroom are just as valuable as those conducted in an industry setting." The results of this question are displayed in figures 1.0 and 1.1 below. Figure 1.0 shows the percentage of responses, which were based on a likert scale. This graph shows that roughly 42 percent of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 34 percent of students agreed with the statement and 26 percent had a neutral response. The responses to this question demonstrate that more students feel that the case studies conducted in an Industry setting are more valuable than those conducted in the classroom.

*Figure 1.0*

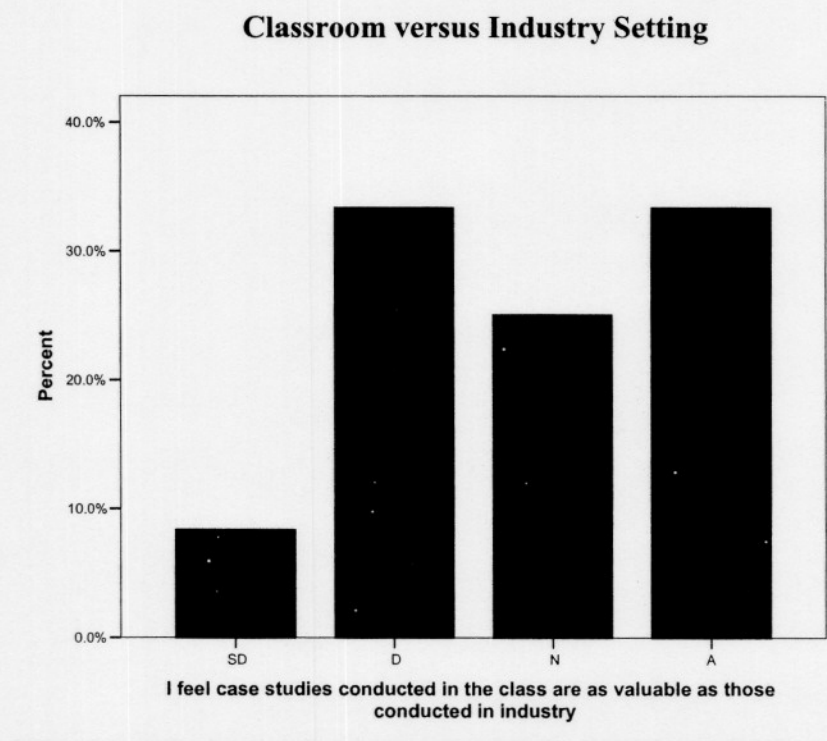
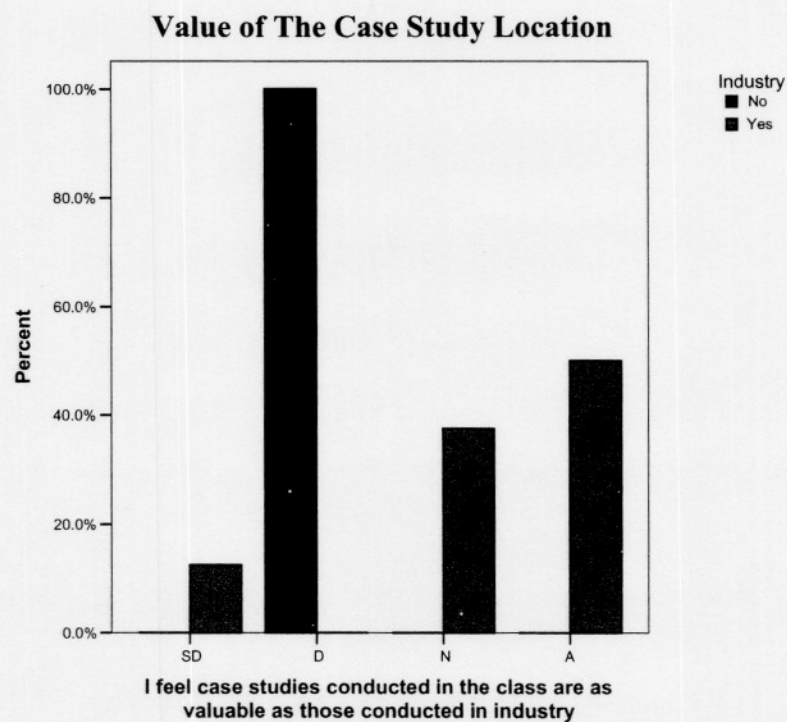




Figure 1.1 below used the same statement as the figure 1.0 however this graph shows the correlation between those students who are working in the industry versus those who are not. Figure 1.1 shows that all of the students that are not working in the industry feel strongly that the case studies conducted in an industry are more valuable than those conducted in the classroom. The majority of those that are working in the Industry tend to be neutral or agree that classroom case studies are just as valuable as those conducted in the Industry.

*Figure 1.1*



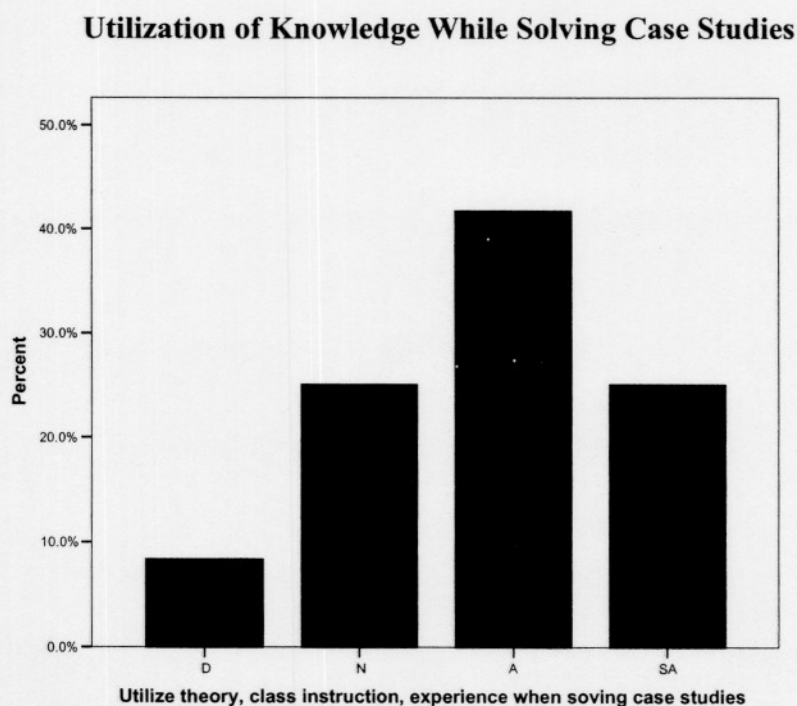
### Case Studies

The second component of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the case study method in general. To accomplish this the author utilized several questions in



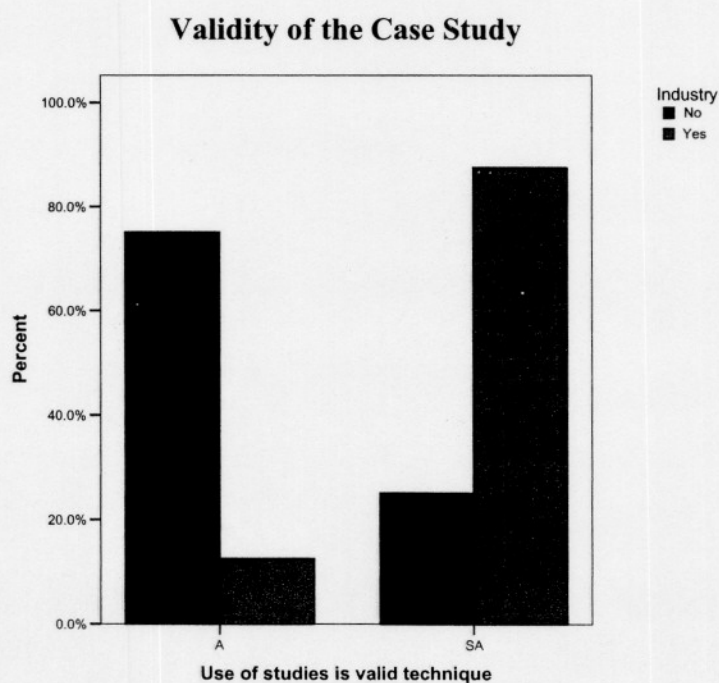
his survey tool. The responses were used to determine how students feel about this method and how effective it is at building a student's management knowledge. First the author attempted to assess the students' feeling on the lecture format of teaching. The results showed that roughly 43 percent of students had neutral feeling on the issue and just over 50 percent of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement "I prefer to take classes that are instructed in lecture format." Only 7 percent of those surveyed preferred the lecture format. This illustrates that an overwhelming majority of students do not favor courses that are instructed using the lecture format. An analysis of the statement "I often utilize theory, classroom instruction, and experience in order to develop solutions to case studies" revealed that over 65 percent of students agree or strongly agree with the statement. Figure 2.0 below illustrates the results utilizing a simple bar graph.

*Figure 2.0*



It is also important to note the responses to the statement: "I find it easier to retain theories taught through case studies opposed to those taught through lecture." There was intense support for this statement as more than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the difference in perceptions between those that are working in the Industry compared to those that are not working in the Industry. The author uses the statement "The use of Case studies is a valid technique for teaching undergraduate students in Hospitality" to assess the differences. Figure 2.1 demonstrates that those students who are working in the Industry agree more strongly to the statement than those who are not working in the Industry. One possible explanation may be that because some students have not had industry experience they may not fully appreciate the value of the case study teaching method. Figure 2.1 also proves students believe that case studies are a valid teaching method, where 100% of the responses agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. Wright acquired similar results in his study with 91.7 percent of respondents giving the same responses (Wright pg 3).

*Figure 2.1*



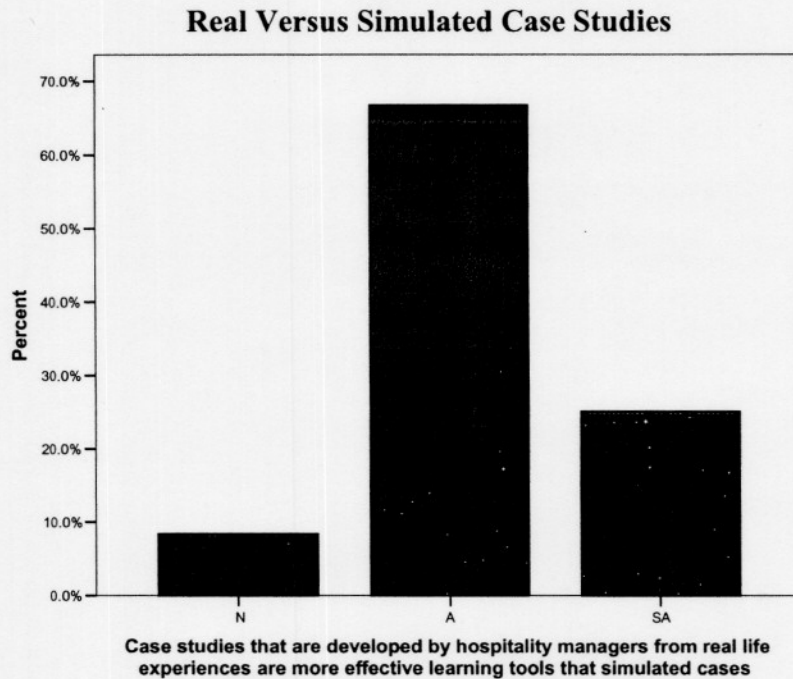
It was also found that over 90 percent of students felt that working in a team was more beneficial than working alone. Also 100 percent of the respondents felt that working with a student that had more experience than them, was a great learning tool. The researcher also discovered that over 30 percent of students were neutral or disagreed that they would read a case study before class if it is were assigned. This is a significant number when compared to the number of respondents that support the case method of instruction and alludes to the need to conduct case studies during a class period in order to achieve maximum participation. This research supports that which was pointed out by Phillip Wright in his research. In his study Wright found that 67.4 % of students agreed that they would read the case before class (Wright, 1996)

#### Collaboration with Industry

A third component of the research involves the collaboration between industry and university to create case studies and share knowledge. The author measured students' views on this topic by employing multiple questions. Respondents demonstrated strong support for the statement "Learning how management would deal with the case studies and why, is a good way to gain practical management knowledge." 100 percent of students answered positively, over 80 percent strongly agreed to the statement. The related declaration "Case studies that are developed by hospitality managers from real life experiences are more effective learning tools than simulated cases." was also well supported by the respondents, over 90 percent strongly agreed or agreed. A visual representation of the responses is shown in figure 3.0 below.



Figure 3.0



## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

This study found an overwhelming support of the case study teaching method and the collaboration with industry. However, there are drawbacks that should be taken into consideration. This method has been found to support active learning through participation, foster the development of diagnostic skills, and promote deeper learning. The utilization of case studies allows students to get a break from the traditional lecture method of instruction and identify the areas they need to focus on. Group discussion also allows students to express their opinions and learn from others that have more experience. Furthermore, presentation skills may also be enhanced if solutions are presented to classmates. Industry cooperation is imperative in the processes of creating cases and fostering interest among students. There are a few drawbacks that should be

known. One example is student resistance; although the percentage of students that dislike the case method is small, it is still an important factor. A significant proportion of students will not read a case study assigned as homework, therefore this should also be taken into consideration. Some students may also find difficulty in creating solutions to ambiguous or unclear cases. Often students are forced to make assumptions when there is inadequate information. Time is also a huge factor; conducting case studies properly may consume a large portion of the class time.

Due to such a small sample size additional research is needed to solidify the authors conclusions. As the Hotel Operations course continues to mature and be fine-tuned it is important to continue to assess the perceptions of students that have completed the course to assure the courses is heading in the right direction. The analysis of a larger number of questionnaires will be able to provide more accurate information on student opinion and may illustrate important correlations. Also further research needs to be conducted regarding other universities that offer similar teaching methods. Students from these universities could then be included in a larger research project. The author would suggest that future research on the topic should include a survey tool that is encoded. This would allow the researcher to discover which students have not completed the survey. This would make it possible to follow up with reminders without intruding on those that have already finished the survey. This adjustment should allow for a much higher response rate. In future research it will also be important to measure the perceptions of the captive hotel more closely. The objective should be to learn whether students feel it creates a more effective learning environment opposed to universities that do not utilized captive facilities.

## Recommendations

When conducting case studies it is important to keep some factors in mind in order to achieve maximum participation and effectiveness. Since over 90 percent of students prefer true cases to fictitious case studies, it is important to find or create cases that are based on real situations as a way to maintain students interest and increase participation. It was also found that more than 90 percent of students feel that cases developed by managers are more effective learning tools than simulated versions. The author also found 100 percent of students felt that learning how management would deal with the case is a good way to gain practical experience. It seems that the most effective way to achieve this type of management participation would be to invite managers as guests in the classroom to participate as co educators. However, managers in the hospitality industry are often working long hours and odd shifts, which would hinder their ability to fully participate with the case studies. This led the author to believe that the most realistic scenario might be to have the students go to the managers. This topic warrants further study and would likely differ at each institution based on what works best for them. The important issue here is the strong need for collaboration between university and industry to develop the most effective and student supported form of the case method. Other factors that are important in creating the most effective method include utilizing class time to conduct the case study. The author found that less than 70 percent of students agreed that they would read the case study before class. In order to achieve maximum participation the instructor should create a balance between the lecture and the case method of instruction. It is also important to carry out case studies in



## Bibliography

- A guide to college programs in Culinary Arts, Hospitality, & Tourism: A directory of CHRIE member colleges and universities.* (1999). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons Inc. Retrieved October 1, 2004, via Einstein Catalog at RIT. need to double space
- Dickinson, C. J. (2000, April). Hospitality Students Interact with Hotel Business Community at HEC. *The Business Journal- Central New York*, 14(15) 5.
- Haywood, K. M., & Bauer, J.A. (1984, August). Case teaching: Special issues in hospitality. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 25(2) 64-67
- Industry and Education Must Work more Closely (2002, November/December). *Hospitality*, pp. 4
- Kreck, L. A. (1992, August). Operational problem solving: Overcoming the weakness of the case method. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 33(4) 69-72 .
- LeBruto, S. M. (1994, August). The educational value of "captive hotels." *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 35(4), 72-79
- Meinhardt, J. (2003, March 7). School readies students for hospitality industry. *The Business Journal*, 23(10) 4
- National Employer Leadership Council. (2000). *Best practices in school to careers: The Hospitality Industry*. Washington: NELC.
- Poynter, J. (1993). *How to research and write a thesis in hospitality and tourism*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Rees, D. W., & Porter, C. (2002) The use of case studies in management training and development. Part 1. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 34(1) 5-8
- Remenyi, D., Money, A., Price, D., & Bannister, F. (2002) The creation of knowledge through case study research. *Irish Journal of Management*, 23(2) 1
- Shaw, M. (1982, August). Applying case studies to hospitality management education. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 23(2) 28-31

Skapinker, M. (2001, November). Lessons That Simulate the Real World: Teaching Methods: Case Studies Have Brought Fame and Fortune to Harvard Business School- but not Everyone is Convinced, says Michael Skapinker. *Financial Times*, pp.16

Tague, N. R. (1995). *The Quality Toolbox*. Milwaukee: ASQ Quality Press

Thiede, B. (2004, August 27). Hospitality industry sees big payoff from school. *The Business Journal*, 19(22), 25

Wright, P. (1996) Simulating reality: The role of the case incident in higher education. *Education and Training*, 38(6) 20-24

**A report on how conducting case studies in an  
Industry setting affects a student's practical knowledge in the  
field of Hospitality Management.**

---

Dear Hospitality Students:

My name is Jason Duprat, I am conducting a survey for my senior project regarding the format of the Hotel Operations course at RIT. In 2002 the course was restructured to function closely with the management team at the RIT Inn. You were selected for this survey because you have taken this course within the last two years. During visits to the Inn you completed case studies and discussed possible solutions with the managers and were able to learn what decisions the management team at the Inn made in each of the case studies. Your opinion relating to the use of case studies will enable the hospitality administration and me to gauge the effectiveness of this teaching method. The data collected in this survey will only be used to complete the objectives stated above. Please take a few minutes and complete this survey by Friday October 15<sup>th</sup>. You may turn the completed survey into my mail folder under the HOTEL heading or give it to me directly. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Thank You,

Jason Duprat



## A report on how conducting case studies in an Industry setting affects a student's practical knowledge in the field of Hospitality Management.

To better educate the Hospitality Students at RIT, the researcher would like your opinion about the use of case studies in an Industry setting as a method of teaching. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree at the statements below by placing a mark in the appropriate box.

**Please use the following scale to express your opinion.**

1 – (SD) Strongly Disagree

2 – (D) Disagree

3 – (N) Neutral

4 – (A) Agree

5 – (SA) Strongly Agree

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. The use of case studies is a valid technique for teaching undergraduate students in Hospitality.					
2. If I am informed that the story told by a case study is true, I tend to be more interested than I would be if the case study were fictitious.					
3. Learning how management would deal with the case studies and why is a good way to gain practical management knowledge.					
4. I would read the case study before coming to class. (If required)					
5. I prefer to take classes that are instructed in a lecture format.					
6. I find the use of dialog in a case study unnecessary; the technique doesn't add anything to the learning experience.					
7. I feel case studies conducted in classroom are just as valuable as those conducted in an industry setting.					
8. I find it easier to retain theories taught through case studies opposed to those taught through lecture.					
9. Case studies make it possible to learn things that I would otherwise only be able to learn through work experience.					
10. Working on case studies with a person that has more experience is a great learning tool.					

11. I find that working in a team when conducting a case study is more beneficial to me than working alone.					
12. Case studies that are developed by hospitality managers from real life experiences are more effective learning tools than simulated cases.					
13. I often utilize theory, classroom instruction and experience in order to develop solutions to case studies.					
14. I do not like to read and discuss case studies in class.					

**Please help the researcher further analyze the data by providing information about you. (Circle one)**

Gender: Male / Female

Year of Study: 1<sup>st</sup> year / 2<sup>nd</sup> year / 3<sup>rd</sup> year / 4<sup>th</sup> year / 5<sup>th</sup> year

What year did you complete Hotel Operations? 2002 / 2003

Do you have any management experience? Yes / No

Are you currently working in the Industry? Yes / No

Additional comments regarding the practice of conducting case studies in an industry setting:

---



---



---

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

# Introduction to the Case-Study Method

(Adapted from: Seperich, G.J., M.J. Woolverton, J. G. Beierlein and D. E. Hahn, eds., **Cases in Agribusiness Management**, Gorsuch Scarisbrick, Publishers, Scottsdale, AZ 1996)

The case-study method may be new to you. Experience has shown that case studies bring interesting, real-world situations into the classroom study of agribusiness marketing, finance and management.

As you discuss cases with your fellow students, you will learn that decision making is often a confrontational activity involving people with different points of view. Most important, you will learn how to work toward consensus while tolerating legitimate differences of opinion.

Decision making is what managers do. The decisions of managers directly influence revenues, costs, and profits of an agribusiness firm. If you are to be successful in an agribusiness career, you must learn to be a good decision maker. You must develop the ability to apply classroom training in business and economics to agribusiness problem solving so that you can learn how to (1) make decision making easier, (2) improve the analytical quality of decisions, (3) reduce the time required to make decisions, and (4) increase the frequency of correct decisions.

After completing a few case studies, you should find them an interesting and rewarding way to learn. You will soon discover, however, that case studies require an approach that is different from normal homework assignments. Each case can have more than one right answer depending on how the problem is defined and which assumptions are made. Students commonly spend several hours preparing the solution for a case assigned for classroom discussion. The time you spend working on case studies will be well spent because it will prepare you to confidently take on a position in agribusiness in which decision-making challenges face you each day. Success in your career will be the real reward for the work you do in preparing case studies.

## ATTACKING THE CASE

Your first reaction upon reading a case will probably be to feel over whelmed by all the information. Upon closer reading, you may feel that the case is missing some information that is vital to your decision. Don't despair. Case writers do this on purpose to make the cases represent as closely as possible the typical situations faced by agribusiness managers. In this age of computers, managers often have to sift through an excessive amount of information to glean the facts needed to make a decision. In other situations, *there is too little information and too little time or money to collect all the information desired*. One definition of management is "the art of using scanty information to make terribly important, semi-permanent decisions under time pressure." One reason for using the case-study method is for you to learn how to function effectively in that type of decision-making environment.



When assigned a case that does not contain all the information you need, you can do two things: First, seek additional information. Library research or a few telephone calls may provide the necessary facts. Second, you can make assumptions when key facts or data are not available. Your assumptions should be reasonable and consistent with the situation because the "correctness" of your solution may depend upon the assumptions you make. This is one reason that a case can have more than one right solution. In fact, your teacher may be more interested in the analysis and process you used to arrive at the decision than in its absolute correctness.

In some cases, the case writer(s) have provided questions to guide your analysis; in other cases it is up to you, the case analyst, to decide which questions are relevant in defining the problem. This too is by design. In an actual agribusiness situation you will have to decide which questions to ask, and certainly no one will give you a list of multiple-choice answers. This is why it is suggested that you not limit your analysis to the questions at the end of a case.

### The Seven Steps of Problem Analysis

Using an organized seven-stem approach in analyzing a case will make the entire process easier and can increase your learning benefits.

1. *Read the case thoroughly.* To understand fully what is happening in a case, it is necessary to read the case carefully and thoroughly. You may want to read the case rather quickly the first time to get an overview of the industry, the company, the people, and the situation. Read the case again more slowly, making notes as you go.
2. *Define the central issue.* Many cases will involve several issues or problems. Identify the most important problems and separate them from the more trivial issues. After identifying what appears to be a major underlying issue, examine related problems in the functional areas (for example, marketing, finance, personnel, and so on). Functional area problems may help you identify deep-rooted problems that are the responsibility of top management.
3. *Define the firm's goals.* Inconsistencies between a firm's goals and its performance may further highlight the problems discovered in step 2. At the very least, identifying the firm's goals will provide a guide for the remaining analysis.
4. *Identify the constraints to the problem.* The constraints may limit the solutions available to the firm. Typical constraints include limited finances, lack of additional production capacity, personnel limitations, strong competitors, relationships with suppliers and customers, and so on. Constraints have to be considered when suggesting a solution.
5. *Identify all the relevant alternatives.* The list should all the relevant alternatives that could solve the problem(s) that were identified in step 2. Use your creativity in coming up with alternative solutions. Even when solutions are suggested in the case, you may be able to suggest better solutions.
6. *Select the best alternative.* Evaluate each alternative in light of the available information. If you have carefully taken the proceeding five steps, a good solution

to the case should be apparent. Resist the temptation to jump to this step early in the case analysis. You will probably miss important facts, misunderstand the problem, or skip what may be the best alternative solution. You will also need to explain the logic you used to choose one alternative and reject the others.

7. *Develop an implementation plan.* The final step in the analysis is to develop a plan for effective implementation of your decision. Lack of an implementation plan even for a very good decision can lead to disaster for a firm and for you. Don't overlook this step. Your teacher will surely ask you or someone in the class to explain how to implement the decision.

## The Report

The course instructor may require a written or an oral report describing your solution to the case. The high quality of your analysis or the brilliance of your insights will do you little good if your solution is not expressed clearly. The teacher is more likely to accept your solution even if he or she does not agree with it, if you are able to identify the issues, explain the analysis and logic that led you to choose a particular alternative, and lay out a good plan for implementing the decision.

## Written Reports

You probably will be asked to write reports for at least some cases. The following guidelines will help you write an effective case analysis. First, in business communications a **short report** is usually considered better than a long report. This does not mean that in your report you can skip key points, but rather that you state relevant points clearly and concisely. Do not include trivial matters.

Second, the report should be well written. It should be **typed** and not contain spelling or grammatical errors. The report you hand in for class should be equivalent in quality to a report you would write for your boss, a senior manager of an agribusiness company. In the early years of your career, particularly in a large firm, you are likely to become known for the quality of your written reports.

A well-written report would contain the following elements:

1. *Executive summary.* This is a concisely written statement, less than one page, placed at the front of the report. It briefly summarizes the major points of the case and your solution. It should describe the major issue, the proposed solution, and the logic supporting the solution.
2. *Problem statement.* Present the central issue(s) or major problem(s) in the case here. Do not rehash the facts of the case; assume that anyone reading the report is familiar with the case.
3. *Alternatives.* Discuss all relevant alternatives. Briefly present the major arguments for and against each alternative. Be sure to state your assumptions and the impact of constraints on each alternative.

4. *Conclusion.* Present the analysis and the logic that led you to select a particular solution. Also discuss the reasons you rejected the other alternatives.
5. *Implementation.* Outline a plan of action that will lead to effective implementation of the decision so that the reader can see not only why you chose a particular alternative but how it will work.

### Oral Reports

In some instances the instructor may specifically require an oral report on a case. One student or a team of students will be assigned an oral report in advance. In many classroom situations, each student must be prepared to discuss any aspect of a case if called upon or to comment on ideas presented by other students. It is not uncommon for a large portion of the course grade to be based on the frequency and quality of a student's oral participation in classroom discussions. Preparation of an oral case report should include the following:

1. *Description of the case situation.* Present a brief overview of the situation in the case. Sometimes a teacher will ask a student to start off the classroom discussion with this overview.
2. *Problem statement.* Describe the major issue(s) or problem(s) in the case.
3. *Analysis of the key alternatives.* Present the results of your analysis of relevant alternatives in a concise manner. Depending on the type of analysis, this is sometimes called "running the numbers."
4. *Conclusion.* Briefly describe the logic that led you to choose the alternative. Summarize why the other alternatives were not chosen.
5. *Implementation.* Present your implementation plan.

Sometimes the teacher will assign a full-case presentation. In that situation you go through the presentation point by point. In a class discussion setting, however, even though you must be prepared, you will almost never make a full-case presentation. You will be asked to present pieces of your presentation. For example, you may be called upon or volunteer to present your conclusion. You are likely to be interrupted, and count on being asked to defend your statements.

### CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of case studies may be among the most challenging assignments given to a student. Cases are not just "busy work" given to fill up a student's time. Approached properly, case analysis can be extremely beneficial in preparing you for a career in agribusiness management by giving you a chance to develop decision-making skills in the classroom so that you will be better prepared to meet the challenges of your after-graduation job.

By preparing solutions to cases studies, you will be exposed to a variety of agribusinesses, management roles, and business situations. Your decision-making skills will be enhanced as you sift through large volumes of information to identify problems,



determine corporate goals, define relevant alternatives, and develop plans to implement decisions. You will hone your ability to apply analytical tools in true-to-life agribusiness situations. By preparing reports, you will learn how to express yourself succinctly, both orally and in writing. You will also develop the ability to defend the logic of your analysis and conclusions. These are all valuable skills for a future agribusiness manager and will help you go a long way in a rewarding career.

## How the Case Method Works

When students are presented with a case, they place themselves in the role of the decision-maker as they read through the situation and identify the problem they are faced with. The next step is to perform the necessary analysis—examining the causes, considering alternative courses of actions—to come to a set of recommendations.

To get the most out of cases, students read and reflect on the case and then often meet in small study groups before class to "warm up" and discuss their findings with other classmates. In class—under the questioning and guidance of the professor—students probe underlying issues, compare different alternatives, and finally, suggest courses of action in light of the company's objectives.

As you watch a case study unfold in class, you'll see students doing 85% of the talking, as the professor steers the conversation by making occasional observations and asking questions. This classroom interaction is enriched by the 80-90 individuals from diverse industries, functions, countries, and experiences. At the end of the class, you'll find that the day's lesson lay in the exchange of ideas amongst the students—and not in a lecture or textbook.

In many cases, convinced they have the right answers, students are surprised at the variety of points of view that emerge from their classmates during the course of the classroom discussion. Having to listen carefully to others' arguments and define their analysis, students learn from one another.

Class participation is so important to the learning model at HBS that 50% of a student's grade is based on the quality of class participation. This requires students and faculty to work closely together—another hallmark of the HBS experience.

During their time at Harvard, students study and prepare over 500 cases—a transforming experience that helps them to recognize the unique aspects of different situations, define problems, suggest further avenues of analysis, and devise and implement action plans. Once they finish the program, HBS graduates have the confidence they need to go off and tackle the many business challenges they will face in their careers.

# The Case Study as a Research Method



## Introduction

Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

Critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. Some dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool. Yet researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems. Reports on case studies from many disciplines are widely available in the literature.

This paper explains how to use the case study method and then applies the method to an example case study project designed to examine how one set of users, non-profit organizations, make use of an electronic community network. The study examines the issue of whether or not the electronic community network is beneficial in some way to non-profit organizations and what those benefits might be.

Many well-known case study researchers such as Robert E. Stake, Helen Simons, and Robert K. Yin have written about case study research and suggested techniques for organizing and conducting the research successfully. This introduction to case study research draws upon their work and proposes six steps that should be used:

- Determine and define the research questions
- Select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques
- Prepare to collect the data
- Collect data in the field
- Evaluate and analyze the data
- Prepare the report



## **Step 1. Determine and Define the Research Questions**

The first step in case study research is to establish a firm research focus to which the researcher can refer over the course of study of a complex phenomenon or object. The researcher establishes the focus of the study by forming questions about the situation or problem to be studied and determining a purpose for the study. The research object in a case study is often a program, an entity, a person, or a group of people. Each object is likely to be intricately connected to political, social, historical, and personal issues, providing wide ranging possibilities for questions and adding complexity to the case study. The researcher investigates the object of the case study in depth using a variety of data gathering methods to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and answers the research questions.

Case study research generally answers one or more questions which begin with "how" or "why." The questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their inter-relationships. To assist in targeting and formulating the questions, researchers conduct a literature review. This review establishes what research has been previously conducted and leads to refined, insightful questions about the problem. Careful definition of the questions at the start pinpoints where to look for evidence and helps determine the methods of analysis to be used in the study. The literature review, definition of the purpose of the case study, and early determination of the potential audience for the final report guide how the study will be designed, conducted, and publicly reported.

## **Step 2. Select the Cases and Determine Data Gathering and Analysis Techniques**

During the design phase of case study research, the researcher determines what approaches to use in selecting single or multiple real-life cases to examine in depth and which instruments and data gathering approaches to use. When using multiple cases, each case is treated as a single case. Each case's conclusions can then be used as information contributing to the whole study, but each case remains a single case. Exemplary case studies carefully select cases and carefully examine the choices available from among many research tools available in order to increase the validity of the study. Careful discrimination at the point of selection also helps erect boundaries around the case.

The researcher must determine whether to study cases which are unique in some way or cases which are considered typical and may also select cases to represent a variety of geographic regions, a variety of size parameters, or other parameters. A useful step in the selection process is to repeatedly refer back to the purpose of the study in order to focus attention on where to look for cases and evidence that will satisfy the purpose of the study and answer the research questions posed. Selecting multiple or single cases is a key element, but a case study can include more than one unit of embedded analysis. For example, a case study may involve study of a single industry and a firm participating in that industry. This type of case study involves two levels of analysis and increases the complexity and amount of data to be gathered and analyzed.

A key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. The researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research questions. Data gathered is normally largely qualitative, but it may also be quantitative. Tools to collect data can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, observation, and even the collection of physical artifacts.

The researcher must use the designated data gathering tools systematically and properly in collecting the evidence. Throughout the design phase, researchers must ensure that the study is well constructed to ensure construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Construct validity requires the researcher to use the correct measures for the concepts being studied. Internal validity (especially important with explanatory or causal studies) demonstrates that certain conditions lead to other conditions and requires the use of multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources to uncover convergent lines of inquiry. The researcher strives to establish a chain of evidence forward and backward. External validity reflects whether or not findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case or cases; the more variations in places, people, and procedures a case study can withstand and still yield the same findings, the more external validity. Techniques such as cross-case examination and within-case examination along with literature review helps ensure external validity. Reliability refers to the stability, accuracy, and precision of measurement. Exemplary case study design ensures that the procedures used are well documented and can be repeated with the same results over and over again.

### **Step 3. Prepare to Collect the Data**

Because case study research generates a large amount of data from multiple sources, systematic organization of the data is important to prevent the researcher from becoming overwhelmed by the amount of data and to prevent the researcher from losing sight of the original research purpose and questions. Advance preparation assists in handling large amounts of data in a documented and systematic fashion. Researchers prepare databases to assist with categorizing, sorting, storing, and retrieving data for analysis.

Exemplary case studies prepare good training programs for investigators, establish clear protocols and procedures in advance of investigator field work, and conduct a pilot study in advance of moving into the field in order to remove obvious barriers and problems. The investigator training program covers the basic concepts of the study, terminology, processes, and methods, and teaches investigators how to properly apply the techniques being used in the study. The program also trains investigators to understand how the gathering of data using multiple techniques strengthens the study by providing opportunities for triangulation during the analysis phase of the study. The program covers protocols for case study research, including time deadlines, formats for narrative reporting and field notes, guidelines for collection of documents, and guidelines for field procedures to be used. Investigators need to be good listeners who can hear exactly the words being used by those interviewed. Qualifications for investigators also include being able to ask good questions and interpret answers. Good investigators review documents looking for facts, but also read between the lines and pursue collaborative

evidence elsewhere when that seems appropriate. Investigators need to be flexible in real-life situations and not feel threatened by unexpected change, missed appointments, or lack of office space. Investigators need to understand the purpose of the study and grasp the issues and must be open to contrary findings. Investigators must also be aware that they are going into the world of real human beings who may be threatened or unsure of what the case study will bring.

After investigators are trained, the final advance preparation step is to select a pilot site and conduct a pilot test using each data gathering method so that problematic areas can be uncovered and corrected. Researchers need to anticipate key problems and events, identify key people, prepare letters of introduction, establish rules for confidentiality, and actively seek opportunities to revisit and revise the research design in order to address and add to the original set of research questions.

#### **4. Collect Data in the Field**

The researcher must collect and store multiple sources of evidence comprehensively and systematically, in formats that can be referenced and sorted so that converging lines of inquiry and patterns can be uncovered. Researchers carefully observe the object of the case study and identify causal factors associated with the observed phenomenon. Renegotiation of arrangements with the objects of the study or addition of questions to interviews may be necessary as the study progresses. Case study research is flexible, but when changes are made, they are documented systematically.

Exemplary case studies use field notes and databases to categorize and reference data so that it is readily available for subsequent reinterpretation. Field notes record feelings and intuitive hunches, pose questions, and document the work in progress. They record testimonies, stories, and illustrations which can be used in later reports. They may warn of impending bias because of the detailed exposure of the client to special attention, or give an early signal that a pattern is emerging. They assist in determining whether or not the inquiry needs to be reformulated or redefined based on what is being observed. Field notes should be kept separate from the data being collected and stored for analysis.

Maintaining the relationship between the issue and the evidence is mandatory. The researcher may enter some data into a database and physically store other data, but the researcher documents, classifies, and cross-references all evidence so that it can be efficiently recalled for sorting and examination over the course of the study.

#### **Step 5. Evaluate and Analyze the Data**

The researcher examines raw data using many interpretations in order to find linkages between the research object and the outcomes with reference to the original research questions. Throughout the evaluation and analysis process, the researcher remains open to new opportunities and insights. The case study method, with its use of multiple data collection methods and analysis techniques, provides researchers with opportunities to triangulate data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.



The tactics used in analysis force researchers to move beyond initial impressions to improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings. Exemplary case studies will deliberately sort the data in many different ways to expose or create new insights and will deliberately look for conflicting data to disconfirm the analysis. Researchers categorize, tabulate, and recombine data to address the initial propositions or purpose of the study, and conduct cross-checks of facts and discrepancies in accounts. Focused, short, repeat interviews may be necessary to gather additional data to verify key observations or check a fact.

Specific techniques include placing information into arrays, creating matrices of categories, creating flow charts or other displays, and tabulating frequency of events. Researchers use the quantitative data that has been collected to corroborate and support the qualitative data which is most useful for understanding the rationale or theory underlying relationships. Another technique is to use multiple investigators to gain the advantage provided when a variety of perspectives and insights examine the data and the patterns. When the multiple observations converge, confidence in the findings increases. Conflicting perceptions, on the other hand, cause the researchers to pry more deeply.

Another technique, the cross-case search for patterns, keeps investigators from reaching premature conclusions by requiring that investigators look at the data in many different ways. Cross-case analysis divides the data by type across all cases investigated. One researcher then examines the data of that type thoroughly. When a pattern from one data type is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger. When evidence conflicts, deeper probing of the differences is necessary to identify the cause or source of conflict. In all cases, the researcher treats the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions answering the original "how" and "why" research questions.

#### **Step 6. Prepare the report**

Exemplary case studies report the data in a way that transforms a complex issue into one that can be understood, allowing the reader to question and examine the study and reach an understanding independent of the researcher. The goal of the written report is to portray a complex problem in a way that conveys a vicarious experience to the reader. Case studies present data in very publicly accessible ways and may lead the reader to apply the experience in his or her own real-life situation. Researchers pay particular attention to displaying sufficient evidence to gain the reader's confidence that all avenues have been explored, clearly communicating the boundaries of the case, and giving special attention to conflicting propositions.

Techniques for composing the report can include handling each case as a separate chapter or treating the case as a chronological recounting. Some researchers report the case study as a story. During the report preparation process, researchers critically examine the document looking for ways the report is incomplete. The researcher uses representative audience groups to review and comment on the draft document. Based on the comments, the researcher rewrites and makes revisions. Some case study researchers suggest that the

document review audience include a journalist and some suggest that the documents should be reviewed by the participants in the study.

## **Applying the Case Study Method to an Electronic Community Network**

By way of example, we apply these six steps to an example study of multiple participants in an electronic community network. All participants are non-profit organizations which have chosen an electronic community network on the World Wide Web as a method of delivering information to the public. The case study method is applicable to this set of users because it can be used to examine the issue of whether or not the electronic community network is beneficial in some way to the organization and what those benefits might be.

### **Step 1. Determine and Define the Research Questions**

*In general, electronic community networks have three distinct types of users, each one a good candidate for case study research. The three groups of users include people around the world who use the electronic community network, the non-profit organizations using the electronic community network to provide information to potential users of their services, and the "community" that forms as the result of interacting with other participants on the electronic community network.*

*In this case, the researcher is primarily interested in determining whether or not the electronic community network is beneficial in some way to non-profit organization participants. The researcher begins with a review of the literature to determine what prior studies have determined about this issue and uses the literature to define the following questions for the study of the non-profit organizations providing information to the electronic community network:*

*Why do non-profit organization participants use the network?*

*How do non-profit organization participants determine what to place on the electronic community network?*

*Do the non-profit organization participants believe the community network serves a useful purpose in furthering their mission? How?*

### **Step 2. Select the Cases and Determine Data Gathering and Analysis Techniques**

*Many communities have constructed electronic community networks on the World Wide Web. At the outset of the design phase, the researcher determines that only one of these networks will be studied and further sets the study boundaries to include only some of the non-profit organizations represented on that one network. The researcher contacts the Board of Directors of the community network, who are open to the idea of the case study. The researcher also gathers computer generated log data from the network and, using this data, determines that an in-depth study of representative organizations from four*

categories -- health care, environmental, education, and religious -- is feasible. The investigator applies additional selection criteria so that an urban-based and a rural-based non-profit are represented in the study in order to examine whether urban non-profits perceive more benefits from community networks than rural organizations.

The researcher considers multiple sources of data for this study and selects document examination, the gathering and study of organizational documents such as administrative reports, agendas, letters, minutes, and news clippings for each of the organizations. In this case, the investigator decides to also conduct open-ended interviews with key members of each organization using a check-list to guide interviewers during the interview process so that uniformity and consistency can be assured in the data, which could include facts, opinions, and unexpected insights. In this case study, the researcher cannot employ direct observation as a tool because some of the organizations involved have no office and meet infrequently to conduct business directly related to the electronic community network. The researcher instead decides to survey all Board members of the selected organizations using a questionnaire as a third data gathering tool. Within-case and cross-case analysis of data are selected as analysis techniques.

### **Step 3. Prepare to Collect the Data**

The researcher prepares to collect data by first contacting each organization to be studied to gain their cooperation, explain the purpose of the study, and assemble key contact information. Since data to be collected and examined includes organizational documents, the researcher states his intent to request copies of these documents, and plans for storage, classification, and retrieval of these items, as well as the interview and survey data. The researcher develops a formal investigator training program to include seminar topics on non-profit organizations and their structures in each of the four categories selected for this study. The training program also includes practice sessions in conducting open-ended interviews and documenting sources, suggested field notes formats, and a detailed explanation of the purpose of the case study. The researcher selects a fifth case as a pilot case, and the investigators apply the data gathering tools to the pilot case to determine whether the planned timeline is feasible and whether or not the interview and survey questions are appropriate and effective. Based on the results of the pilot, the researcher makes adjustments and assigns investigators particular cases which become their area of expertise in the evaluation and analysis of the data.

### **Step 4. Collect Data in the Field**

Investigators first arrange to visit with the Board of Directors of each non-profit organization as a group and ask for copies of the organization's mission, news clippings, brochures, and any other written material describing the organization and its purpose. The investigator reviews the purpose of the study with the entire Board, schedules individual interview times with as many Board members as can cooperate, confirms key contact data, and requests that all Board members respond to the written survey which will be mailed later.



Investigators take written notes during the interview and record field notes after the interview is completed. The interviews, although open-ended, are structured around the research questions defined at the start of the case study.

**Research Question: Why do non-profit organization participants use the network?**

**Interview Questions:** How did the organization make the decision to place data on the World Wide Web community network? What need was the organization hoping to fulfill?

**Research Question: How do non-profit organization participants determine what to place on the electronic community network?**

**Interview Questions:** What process was used to select the information that would be used on the network? How is the information kept up to date?

**Research Question: Do the non-profit organization participants believe the community network serves a useful purpose in furthering their mission? How?**

**Interview Questions:** How does the organization know if the electronic community network is beneficial to the organization? How does the electronic community network further the mission of the organization? What systematic tracking mechanisms exist to determine how many or what types of users are accessing the organization information?

The investigator's field notes record impressions and questions that might assist with the interpretation of the interview data. The investigator makes note of stories told during open-ended interviews and flags them for potential use in the final report. Data is entered into the database.

The researcher mails written surveys to all Board members with a requested return date and a stamped return envelope. Once the surveys are returned, the researcher codes and enters the data into the database so that it can be used independently as well as integrated when the case study progresses to the point of cross-case examination of data for all four cases.

## **Step 5. Evaluate and Analyze the Data**

Within-case analysis is the first analysis technique used with each non-profit organization under study. The assigned investigator studies each organization's written documentation and survey response data as a separate case to identify unique patterns within the data for that single organization. Individual investigators prepare detailed case study write-ups for each organization, categorizing interview questions and answers and examining the data for within-group similarities and differences.

Cross-case analysis follows. Investigators examine pairs of cases, categorizing the similarities and differences in each pair. Investigators then examine similar pairs for differences, and dissimilar pairs for similarities. As patterns begin to emerge, certain

evidence may stand out as being in conflict with the patterns. In those cases, the investigator conducts follow-up focused interviews to confirm or correct the initial data in order to tie the evidence to the findings and to state relationships in answer to the research questions.

### **Step 6 Prepare the Report**

The outline of the report includes thanking all of the participants, stating the problem, listing the research questions, describing the methods used to conduct the research and any potential flaws in the method used, explaining the data gathering and analysis techniques used, and concluding with the answers to the questions and suggestions for further research. Key features of the report include a retelling of specific stories related to the successes or disappointments experienced by the organizations that were conveyed during data collection, and answers or comments illuminating issues directly related to the research questions. The researcher develops each issue using quotations or other details from the data collected, and points out the triangulation of data where applicable. The report also includes confirming and conflicting findings from literature reviews. The report conclusion makes assertions and suggestions for further research activity, so that another researcher may apply these techniques to another electronic community network and its participants to determine whether similar findings are identifiable in other communities. Final report distribution includes all participants.

### **Applicability to Library and Information Science**

Case study research, with its applicability across many disciplines, is an appropriate methodology to use in library studies. In Library and Information Science, case study research has been used to study reasons why library school programs close (Paris, 1988), to examine reference service practices in university library settings (Lawson, 1971), and to examine how questions are negotiated between customers and librarians (Taylor, 1967). Much of the research is focused exclusively on the librarian as the object or the customer as the object. Researchers could use the case study method to further study the role of the librarian in implementing specific models of service. For example, case study research could examine how information-seeking behavior in public libraries compares with information-seeking behavior in places other than libraries, to conduct in-depth studies of non-library community based information services to compare with library based community information services, and to study community networks based in libraries.

### **Conclusion**

Case studies are complex because they generally involve multiple sources of data, may include multiple cases within a study, and produce large amounts of data for analysis. Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method to build upon theory, to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, to explore, or to describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary,

human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results relate directly to the common reader's everyday experience and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations.

### Bibliography

Busha, C. H., & Harter, S. P. (1980). *Research methods in librarianship, techniques and interpretation*. New York: Academic Press.

Chang, H. C. (1974). *Library goals as responses to structural milieu requirements: A comparative case study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

DuMont, R. R. (1975). *The large urban public library as an agency of social reform, 1890-1915*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 352-550.

Emory, C. W., & Cooper, D. R. (1991). *Business research methods*. (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Irvin.

Goldhor, H. (1972). *An introduction to scientific research in librarianship*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Hamel, J. (with Dufour, S., & Fortin, D.). (1993). *Case study methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Harris, S., & Sutton, R. (1986). Functions of parting ceremonies in dying organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 19, 5-30.

Lawson, V. (1971). *Reference service in university libraries, two case studies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York.

McAdams, D. C. (1979). *Powerful actors in public land use decision making processes: A case study in Austin, Texas*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.

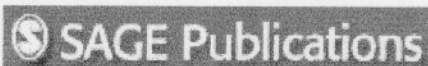
McClure, C. R., & Hernon, P. (Eds.). (1991). *Library and information science research: perspectives and strategies for improvement*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Miller, F. (1986). Use, appraisal, and research: A case study of social history. *The American Archivist*: 49(4), 371-392.



- Paris, M. (1988). *Library school closings: Four case studies*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Powell, R. R. (1985). *Basic research methods for librarians*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Schindler, D. (1996). *Urban youth and the frail elderly: Reciprocal giving and receiving*. New York: Garland.
- Simons, H. (1980). *Towards a science of the singular: Essays about case study in educational research and evaluation*. Norwich, UK: University of East Anglia, Centre for Applied Research in Education.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Swisher, R., & McClure, C. R. (1984). *Research for decision making, methods for librarians*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Taylor, R. S. (1967). *Question-negotiation and information-seeking in libraries*. Bethlehem, PA: Center for the Information Sciences.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1988). *Rethinking the library in the information age: Issues in library research: proposals for the 1990s*. Volume II. Washington, DC.
- Weiss, C.H., & Bucuvala, M. J. (1980). *Social science research and decision-making*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.



CATALOGS



CUSTOMER CARE



VIEW CART



Faculty Cart

Home

Books

Textbooks

Reference Books

Journals

Databases

Software

Publishing with SAGE

You Are Here: SAGE Publications

## PRODUCT SEARCH

GO

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

[About the Title](#)[Features](#)[Reviews](#)[Table of Contents](#)[Additional Materials](#)[Supplements](#)[Related Products](#)[Translations](#)[Permissions](#)

## RESOURCES FOR ...

[Faculty](#)[Book Authors/Editors](#)[Librarians](#)[Booksellers](#)

## EXTRAS

[Request Catalog](#)

## Case Study Method Key Issues, Key Texts

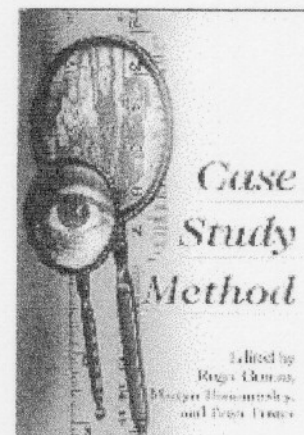
Printable  
Version

## Edited by:

[Roger Gomm](#) The Open University[Martyn Hammersley](#) The Open University,  
UK[Peter Foster](#)

## Description:

This is the most comprehensive guide to the current uses and importance of case study methods in social research. The editors bring together key contributions from the field which reflect different interpretations of the purpose and capacity of case study research. The address issues such as: the problem of generalizing from study of a small number of cases; and the role of case study in developing and testing theories. The editors offer in-depth assessments of the main arguments. An annotated bibliography of the literature dealing with case study research makes this an exhaustive and indispensable guide. 'This is a worthwhile book which will be useful to readers. It collects together key sources on a topic which is a "hardy perennial", guaranteeing its relevance for academics, researchers, and students on higher level methods programmes. The editorial contributions are by well-known authorities in the field, are carefully-constructed, and take a clear position. I would certainly want this book on my shelf' - Nigel Fielding, University of Surrey

**Hardcover :** 0761964134**List Price:** \$116.00[ADD TO CART](#)**Paperback :** 0761964142**List Price:** \$37.95[ADD TO CART](#)**Publisher:**

Sage Publications Ltd

**Pub Date:** 12/2000**Pages:** 288**Subject Areas:**

-Qualitative Research

Site best viewed with [Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 and Higher](#) or [Netscape Navigator 6.0 and Higher](#)

© 2003 | SAGE Publications | All rights reserved.

[Contact Us](#) | 800-818-7243or email [webmaster@sagepub.com](mailto:webmaster@sagepub.com)

## How the Case Method Works

When students are presented with a case, they place themselves in the role of the decision-maker as they read through the situation and identify the problem they are faced with. The next step is to perform the necessary analysis—examining the causes, considering alternative courses of actions—to come to a set of recommendations.

To get the most out of cases, students read and reflect on the case and then often meet in small study groups before class to "warm up" and discuss their findings with other classmates. In class—under the questioning and guidance of the professor—students probe underlying issues, compare different alternatives, and finally, suggest courses of action in light of the company's objectives.

As you watch a case study unfold in class, you'll see students doing 85% of the talking, as the professor steers the conversation by making occasional observations and asking questions. This classroom interaction is enriched by the 80-90 individuals from diverse industries, functions, countries, and experiences. At the end of the class, you'll find that the day's lesson lay in the exchange of ideas amongst the students—and not in a lecture or textbook.

In many cases, convinced they have the right answers, students are surprised at the variety of points of view that emerge from their classmates during the course of the classroom discussion. Having to listen carefully to others' arguments and define their analysis, students learn from one another.

Class participation is so important to the learning model at HBS that 50% of a student's grade is based on the quality of class participation. This requires students and faculty to work closely together—another hallmark of the HBS experience.

During their time at Harvard, students study and prepare over 500 cases—a transforming experience that helps them to recognize the unique aspects of different situations, define problems, suggest further avenues of analysis, and devise and implement action plans. Once they finish the program, HBS graduates have the confidence they need to go off and tackle the many business challenges they will face in their careers.